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ABSTRACT

Classroom management may be the most fundamental and most difficult task the teacher performs. A search of the literature reveals at least five rather different definitions of classroom management that represent particular philosophical approaches: 1) the authoritarian approach, 2) the permissive approach, 3) the behavior modification approach, 4) the approach based on creating a positive social and emotional climate in the classroom, and 5) the approach that views the classroom as a social system in which group processes are of major importance. Each of the last three represents a different but defensible position concerning classroom management, and supervisors should encourage teachers to develop a pluralistic definition of classroom management. A sixth approach is the "bag of tricks" approach, which consists of a combination of common sense, old wives' tales, and folklore. Because this approach is not derived from a well-conceptualized base, it lacks consistency and tends to be reactive, instead of proactive. It is important that a teacher learn to identify his or her classroom management approach and be able to distinguish between instructional problems requiring instructional solutions and managerial problems requiring managerial solutions. (Author/JG)

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CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT
Implications for Supervision

by Dr. Gonzalo Garza

A few years ago, a survey of 3,400 classroom teachers throughout the nation indicated that deterioration of discipline was rated by our profession ahead of all other problems, second only to the old twin-problem of insufficient salaries and inadequate school facilities. Discipline is the indispensable element in a learning situation. A newspaper once prophetically announced by a small misprint which changed an "s" into an "h" that "CLASHES WILL BEGIN NEXT TUESDAY." How true that is, unfortunately! Without efficient classroom management classes turn into clashes between pupil and teacher. The child's impression of education in a disorderly setting is suggested by the reply a boy gave his father after the first day of school:

"Well, how did you like school, son?"

"I've never been to such a place," answered the little fellow. "There was a lady there who didn't do anything but shout at us to keep quiet."

How do we avoid classroom bedlam?

Consider the positive meaning of classroom management. Too often we think of classroom management in purely negative terms: no noise, no running around, no disturbance. This is a misunderstanding of the real meaning of classroom management. Classroom management basically means good teaching.

It has been wisely said, "An orderly classroom is not where there is an absence of noise, but where there is the presence of a purpose."

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The principal establishes the climate for good classroom management.

WHAT IS A SCHOOL PRINCIPAL?

If he looks around, he's snooping; if he doesn't, he's lazy.

If he tries to settle all complaints, he's a fool; if he doesn't, he's not earning his pay.

If he confers with an inexperienced teacher, she is his pet; if he doesn't, he's a bull-headed dictator.

If he talks with young teachers, he's a Romeo; if he doesn't, he shuns their problems.

If he insists on rules, he's a stickler; if he doesn't, he's a lax administrator.

He's expected to be as cunning as a cat, as blind as a bat, as patient as Job, and as wise as Solomon.

But isn't that asking a bit too much?

MY CHILD AND YOURS

When my child hits your child,
He has not yet adjusted;
But when your child hits my child,
He simply can't be trusted.

My child's temper tantrums
Prove only that he's bored.
But your child's violent outbursts
Simply cannot be ignored.

When my child breaks your child's toys,
They weren't built for normal use.
But when your child breaks my child's toys,
There's no sense in such abuse.

My child is such a little dear
But surely you can see
If your child were mine to rear,
How different he would be.

--Selected

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AS IT RELATES TO SUPERVISION

I. Rationale

No other aspect of teaching is so often cited as a major concern by prospective, beginning, and experienced teachers as classroom management. No other aspect of teaching is more frequently discussed in the professional literature - or the faculty lounge. For those of us in supervision, it is imperative that we are knowledgeable in this area. We must look at those approaches proven effective and relevant to current needs of the classroom. Such a review can serve as a springboard for practical application.

The teacher's competence in classroom management is largely a function of his or her understanding of the dynamics of effective management. As supervisors and principals, we need to help teachers identify the management systems they are already using. We need to give teachers an opportunity to try out alternative approaches and to practice such approaches in a safe environment, simulation situation, because classroom management may be considered the most fundamental - and the most difficult - task the teacher performs.

II. Objectives

These general objectives indicate the scope of this session today.

1) Participants learn about current trends in classroom management.

2) Participants review proven approaches in order to formulate practical recommendations for the classroom.

3) Participants become aware of and practice simulation as a tool for staff development, self-improvement.

Many of the ideas included in this presentation are indeed current since they are taken from pre-publication material, prepared by Dr. Wilford Weber, Professor of Education at the University of Houston, and a recognized authority on the subject of classroom management. I am grateful to Dr. Weber for his permission to include material in today's presentation. (Classroom Teaching Skills: A Handbook)

III. Definitions

While it is something of an oversimplification, a search of the literature on teaching reveals at least five rather different definitions of the term classroom management. Each of the five is different because it represents a particular philosophical position regarding classroom management.

One of these positions - (1) the authoritarian approach - views classroom management as the process of controlling student behavior. The role of the teacher is to establish and to maintain order in the classroom. Primary emphasis is on preserving order and maintaining control through the use of discipline. Indeed, often discipline and classroom management are seen as synonymous terms by advocates

of this approach. In fact, as supervisors, we sometimes equate classroom control with good classroom management.

A second position - one directly contrary to the authoritarian approach - is the (2) permissive approach. Here the teacher's role is to help students feel free to do what they want whenever they want. A definition that reflects this viewpoint might be stated as follows: Classroom management is that set of activities by which a teacher maximizes student freedom.

The principles of (3) behavior modification - when learning takes place then there is change in behavior - provide the basis for a third position. The role of the teacher is to foster desirable student behavior and to eliminate undesirable behavior. In short, the teacher helps the student learn appropriate behavior by applying principles derived from theories of reinforcement.

The fourth position views classroom management as the process of creating a positive (4) social and emotional climate in the classroom. The assumption of this position is that learning is maximized in a positive classroom climate, which, in turn, stems from good interpersonal relationships - both teacher/student and student/student relationships. It is also assumed that the teacher is key to these relationships. Therefore, the teacher's role is to develop a positive socio-emotional classroom climate through the establishment of healthy interpersonal relationships.

A fifth viewpoint conceives the classroom to be a social system in which (5) group processes are of major importance. The basic assumption is that instruction takes place within a group context. The role of the teacher is to foster the development and operation of an effective classroom system. - Buddy work, peer tutoring, show and tell.

Each of the last three definitions - (3) Behavior modification, (4) Social/Emotional climate, (5) Group processes - represents a different but defensible position concerning classroom management. Because none has been proved best, it is optimum that you, as supervisors, encourage teachers to develop a pluralistic definition of classroom management. The teacher who adopts such a definition is committed to use those behaviors which are most appropriate to a particular situation; he or she is not tied to only one approach in establishing and maintaining conditions in which students can learn. According to Dr. Weber, the teacher who takes a pluralistic approach to classroom management would find it impossible, even contradictory, to reconcile the authoritarian and permissive approaches with the other three - the (1) behavior-modification, (2) socioemotional-climate, and the (3) group-process approaches. A pluralistic definition which takes these three approaches into account might state: Classroom management is that set of activities by which the teacher promotes appropriate student behavior and eliminates inappropriate student behavior,

develops good interpersonal relationships and a positive socio-emotional climate, and establishes and maintains an effective and productive classroom organization.

Unlike the five approaches just discussed, each of which is based upon a definite philosophical position, the sixth - the "bag of tricks" approach - has no philosophical or psychological base but consists of a combination of common sense, old wives' tales, and folklore. Descriptions of the bag of tricks approach usually consist of a list of things a teacher should do - or should not do - when confronted with various types of classroom management problems. Because these lists often have the appearance of being quick and easy recipes, this approach is also known as the cookbook approach. The following are typical of the kinds of statements one might find on such a list:

Never raise your voice when admonishing a student.

Always be firm and fair when dealing with students.

Always be sure a student is guilty before punishing him or her.

Because the bag of tricks approach is not derived from a well-conceptualized base, it lacks consistency. Even though many suggestions put forward make a great deal of sense, there is no set of principles that permits a teacher to generalize to other problems. Additionally, the "bag of tricks" approach tends to cause a teacher to be reactive in dealing with classroom management. In other words, the teacher

who uses this approach usually is reacting to specific problems and using short-range solutions. It is more effective to be proactive, to anticipate problems, and to use long-range solutions. The teacher is the key.

As a part of developing a pluralistic approach, it is important that a teacher learn to identify the classroom management approach he or she is now using. A teacher's own teaching style, her particular value system influence which approach he/she uses. For example, a teacher who must be the authority figure in any situation would have a difficult time using the group process approach effectively in the classroom. Teachers, however, can become comfortable using different approaches to classroom management. Knowledge of the dynamics involved in each approach is Step Number One. Step Number Two is the opportunity for each teacher to try out the techniques, to put into practice the theory. We are finding in our Staff Development Department here in Houston that when teachers are provided with uninterrupted time away from the classroom, time for both theory and practice, changes in teacher behavior with relation to classroom management can take place. At the Staff Development Center a teacher can try new strategies in a safe, simulated environment, first role-playing with colleagues, and later micro-teaching with a small group of students. When a teacher completes this training and returns to his or her home school, a trainer from Staff Development

goes along to facilitate the transition from a controlled to a normal environment that exhibits normal classroom management problems.

IV. Instruction and Management

Because teaching consists of two dimensions, instruction and management, classroom problems are of two kinds: instructional problems and managerial problems. *Instructional activities are intended to facilitate the student's achievement of specific educational objectives. *Diagnosing learner needs, planning lessons, presenting information, asking questions, and evaluating learner progress are examples of instructional activities. Managerial activities are intended to create and maintain conditions in which instruction can take place effectively and efficiently. Rewarding promptness, developing teacher-student rapport, and establishing productive group norms are examples of managerial activities. Admittedly, it is often difficult to decide whether a particular teaching behavior is instructional or managerial, because the two are usually intertwined. The effective teacher, however, must be able to distinguish between instructional problems that require instructional solutions and managerial problems that require managerial solutions. Too often teachers attempt to solve managerial problems with instructional solutions. For example, making a lesson more interesting - a commonly suggested instructional remedy - is not likely to solve the problem of children who are withdrawn because they have not been accepted by their classmates. Nonacceptance and withdrawal are management problems and require a managerial solution.

Some Precepts for Classroom Management

1. Set your standards early.

   Good classroom control is established during the first days--in fact, during the first minutes--of school. Try to set this atmosphere by example, rather than by establishing a long list of "do's and don't's." (You will, of course, be so kind as to ignore the fact that I'm giving you just such a list! You may now read on.) Settle the first few incidents which arise quickly, firmly, and fairly.

2. Teach an interesting, varied lesson and follow up on it.

   Involve the students in group work, panels and other interesting activities. Teachers who talk and lecture a great deal are apt to become boring--whether they realize it or not. When students are creatively busy, interested and satisfied, they will rarely cause serious problems. Students should know specifically what it is for which they are responsible and the teacher must see to it that their responsibility is both achieved and adequately recognized.

3. Let students know you like them.

   Good disciplinarians give children a feeling they are liked. Good teachers--like good parents--can still transmit this affection even when they find it necessary to reprimand children. Children come to know your true feelings about them, not so much from what you say as from the attitudes reflected in your least conscious actions toward them.

4. Cultivate a manner which is friendly but which commands respect.

   This manner may not come naturally to a beginning teacher, but it should be worked at diligently. Just as a clergyman can invoke feelings of warmth and respect, so should a teacher work for a similar relationship with his class. The teacher's manner should be firm but fair.

5. Try to emphasize the positive.

   Provide each child with some sort of success experiences. The old bromide that "nothing succeeds like success" is an integral part of good discipline. Students who consistently face failure will become dissatisfied. Such discontent leads to problems.

6. Make your disciplinary actions quick, consistent, just, constructive--and inevitable.

Students understand and accept quick and fair action. They respect a predictable and consistent course of action. Actions that are deemed unacceptable by the teacher on Monday should also be deemed unacceptable by the teacher on Friday. Try to avoid threats--especially empty threats. But if you have threatened a pupil, be prepared to follow through and suffer the consequences if you've acted hastily. Students are perceptive enough to see through a bluff quickly. They can also recognize the implicit inadequacies of the teacher whose discipline in his class depends upon threats. They may also understand their teachers or principal better than either would think possible. As adults, many of us would make fine ostriches, hiding our faults and weaknesses from no one but ourselves.

7. Avoid group punishment like the plague.

Group punishment--that is, the punishment of the many for the misdeeds of the few--is rarely, if ever, justified. Punish the offender, not the innocent. If you cannot identify the guilty one, wait; the group will assist you if you have earned their respect.

8. Do not humiliate students nor use sarcasm.

One can punish effectively without the use of sarcasm or humiliating techniques. When a child is humiliated or backed into a corner psychologically, he will lash back since, having lost self-respect in front of the class, he has little more to lose. Humiliating techniques include such actions as placing a child outside the room in sight of many who do not understand the nature of his fault but who may delight in his misfortune, standing a pupil in the corner or with nose in ring drawn on board, taping the mouth shut, and singling out a child for a "dressing-down" in the presence of the class.

Even what may appear to be the opposite, praise of a child before the whole class, may be just as devastating. This, if it is done in such a manner as to say to all others that they are inferior to this "golden goose" who has so pleased the teacher.

And though one child may be insensitive enough to not be apparently hurt by actions such as those mentioned, the ripple effect produced within the class does affect others. It may even ripple through the telephone lines, thus producing community problems also.

(Quite simply, disciplinary and reward measures which are not constructive are destructive.)

9. Avoid using school grades as a threat.

Misbehavior may often influence a student's performance. But a teacher's threatening to lower grades as a means of punishment does not build good discipline, nor does it really motivate a student to learn. Such tactics may be our inept way of hiding our own ineptitude as teachers.

10. Know the background and problems of each child, or at least, recognize that there may be a problem and try to be understanding.

Students who are habitual troublemakers may be socially and emotionally maladjusted. Such problems are often environmental, sometimes organic. Get to know the parents and home situation of problem children as soon as possible. Use your cumulative files immediately and refer recurrent problems to the appropriate personnel. If we are truly adult and professional (or trying hard to be), we should not be hesitant to read another teacher's remarks about a student before we have worked for months with the student.

11. Involve the parents of students who constantly misbehave.

Call in parents of troublemaking students for a conference. Such a meeting often contributes to the teacher's understanding of the child and his home. It also provides a way by which the teacher can enlist parental cooperation for solving problems readily. Many parents are only too happy to cooperate.

12. Keep a simple record of incidents committed by recurrent offenders.

The simple technique of recording dates and incidents of recurrent offenders on an ordinary 3 x 5 card is an invaluable administrative technique. While the mind forgets, the card does not. This information proves useful in case of later referral to parents, the principal, the school psychologist, the counselor, or to other personnel.

13. Resist the temptation to have a student "Gestapo" or "CIA."

Do not assign students to report on their classmates' misbehavior during your absence from the room. This can and usually does result in covert counter actions toward the student "policeman" as well as toward you. Much better would be a group effort toward assumption of self-discipline with subsequent group sanctions toward the offenders. This can only be accomplished when your class as a whole has sufficient respect for you to regard highly your relationship with them.

14. Have students write a report, with full details, on more serious disciplinary infractions.

The writing of such reports may provide a valuable cooling-off period for both student and teacher, may improve student communication, and most certainly can prove helpful in dealing with skeptical parents. You might protect yourself further by requiring the return of such reports, signed by a parent. Absolutely avoid the "I shall not . . . " written 100 times - answer to discipline problems. Such punishment does absolutely nothing to give positive direction to the child, does nothing to inspire or encourage improvement, and does build up a strong resentment to the teacher and anything he wants of that child. A student with any WILL at all will not accept this useless repetition as intelligent stimulus for any intelligent activity.

15. Cultivate your own special disciplinary techniques.

A stern look or an effective pause are useful techniques used by many teachers. Code and symbolic signals adequately indicate to many children what you expect of them. A quick notation on the offender and/or offense with the awareness of the offender may have a persuasive effect. If you cannot think of anything yourself or are not able to grasp the implications of what others may do, you might read advice of teachers and others who understand the emotional and psychological effects of particular disciplinary actions. Good teaching does not exist apart from the learner. Stated another way, discipline problems develop if learning doesn't. And all discipline problems are not overt. A quiet, attentive-looking, well-behaved class in no manner proves that real learning is taking place. It could, but it could also be no better than the "Obedience School" on Sunday afternoon in the shopping center parking lot. We are thinking animals and real thought is both stimulating, exciting, and provocative.

At the heart of any technique, let there be an impersonal but positive reaction to misbehavior. Remember that self-discipline is the only true discipline and this can only be developed within a controlled but permissive environment. You might also consider that no one ever develops perfect self-discipline so don't lose control!

16. Do not assign extra school work as punishment.

The teacher who assigns extra pages of school work in any subject as punishment does absolutely nothing to create any interest in that work or in school. Such a practice is completely self-defeating in terms of what we hope to accomplish as professional educators.

17. Use the principal as a resource person before problems get out of hand, not as a whipping-boy after it's too late.

The role of the principal as disciplinarian has its place. More constructive is the role of the principal as a teacher-helper in problems of classroom management. As such he can do much to help the teacher implement the concept of preventive discipline. The causes of discipline problems are multiple. They are seldom as simple or clear cut as the upset teacher believes when a crisis occurs. And the principal can frequently perceive more behind such misbehavior than the teacher who may be rather emotionally involved.

18. Know yourself.

Take a good look at yourself and your teaching procedures from time to time. Do not take out your own personal problems on your pupils. Realize your limitations, and try to correct them. Above all, bring to the school an honest feeling of liking for your work. And know what your work is like. It could well be the most complex profession on earth. It is built upon the most unstable subsoil imaginable; every particle of it is a variable in unending variety. For this reason, we can never be absolutely certain that we have accomplished what we set out to do. On the other hand, the education of the human genus is not at all impossible, it is only the art of doing what is possible under the most adverse of circumstances. When we know ourselves better, we'll have keener insight into just what is possible.